

CLAIMS

We claim:

1. A method of tracking electronic mail (e-mail) transmitted by a sender, the method comprising the steps of:
 - a) requiring each Internet Service Provider (ISP) to utilize an appliance, said appliance being registered with (if not issued by) a governmental agency or its representative, and each appliance having its own serial number;
 - b) amending each e-mail transmitted by a sender with an encrypted code containing an identification code unique (for a certain period of time) to each email sent through an Internet Service Provider and the serial number of said appliance, thereby allowing each e-mail to be traced back to the originating ISP.
2. The method of tracking electronic mail (e-mail) according to claim 1 wherein each identification code can be used to cross-reference an ISP's customer login and customer connection records for allowing each e-mail to be traced back to the sender.
3. The method of tracking electronic mail (e-mail) according to claim 1, after the step of amending the e-mail and after the e-mail has been transmitted by the sending ISP, further comprising the step of validating all incoming e-mails by the receiving ISP to ensure that e-mails originate from a registered appliance.

4. The method of filtering or labeling electronic mail (e-mail) according to claim 3 further comprising the step of optionally discarding or labeling e-mails that do not originate from a registered appliance.

5. The method of tracking electronic mail (e-mail) according to claim 1 wherein said appliance is rendered in hardware.

6. The method of tracking electronic mail (e-mail) according to claim 1 wherein said appliance is rendered in software.

7. The method of tracking electronic mail (e-mail) according to claim 1 wherein the method is adapted to track SMTP mail messages.

8. The method of tracking electronic mail (e-mail) according to claim 1 wherein the method is adapted to track TCP/IP packets.

9. The method of tracking electronic mail (e-mail) according to claim 1 further comprising the step of assisting the government in enforcing a National Do Not E-Mail Registry.

10. An apparatus for tracking electronic mail (e-mail) transmitted by a sender, the apparatus comprising:

a) an appliance registered with a governmental agency and issued to each Internet Service Provider (ISP), said appliance being assigned a unique serial number;

b) means of integrating said appliance into an ISP's SMTP e-mail routing system in order to amend each e-mail transmitted by a sender with an identification code and the serial number of said appliance, thereby allowing each e-mail to be traced back to the originating ISP.

11. The apparatus of claim 10 wherein each identification code can be used to cross-reference an ISP's customer login and customer connection records for allowing each e-mail to be traced back to the sender.